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INFORMATION

November 14, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger
SUBJECT: North Vietnamese War Problems

I asked the CIA to give us a review of the difficulties the North Vietnamese are facing in continuing to pursue the war. Although the review purposefully makes no effort to present a balanced assessment of Hanoi's situation, it does provide a useful catalog of the extent and depth of the significant problems faced by Hanoi.

Following are some of the major highlights:

Problems in North Vietnam

-- War-weariness has increased, causing diminution of active support for Hanoi war policy among army and party ranks.

-- Leadership differences persist over the proper tactical mix of military and diplomatic tactics to win the war.

-- Economic problems have deepened despite the bombing halt. Food is still in short supply, exports are far down, and industry has not recovered.

Problems in South Vietnam

-- Population control by the Communists has declined from a statistical 22 percent in January 1968 to about 6 percent at present.

-- Infrastructure continues to weaken due both to losses from allied operations and growing defections from Communist ranks.

NSS Review Completed.

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--Combat strength has been going down. Regulars, as a result of losses and lack of replacement, may have dropped by over 40,000 men this year to a total of around 150,000 or less. The number of irregulars has suffered a steady decline from over 100,000 after Tet 1968 to around 60-80,000 at present, with a commensurate decrease in effectiveness.

--Other problems include the drying up of the local Communist economic base, friction between North Vietnamese and Viet Cong soldiers, and the persisting decline in general morale which has definitely reached the lowest level of the war at present.

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ACTION

November 14, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: John Holdridge

SUBJECT: North Vietnamese War Problems

Per your request, we have turned our gist of the CIA memorandum on North Vietnamese war problems into an information memo for the President.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you sign the memorandum for the President at Tab A.

Attachment

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